

Trip Dossier for Costa Rica – Active Costa Rica

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Costa Rica is just made for families and the phrase you'll hear most here is 'Pura Vida' – it's a good life! This trip is mixture of nature and adrenalin that shows you the highlights of this fascinating country and keeps you active along the way. It is also aimed towards families with older children and at 10 days is perfect for those who have limited holiday time. You will experience the amazing flora and fauna of the rainforest, see an active volcano for some of nature's finest fireworks and, if you wish, end with some relaxation on a beautiful Pacific Coast beach. You have the chance to cross a hanging bridge, ride a horse, zip wire through the canopy or try rafting through the rainforest however no experience is needed in advance. Comfortable accommodation awaits you at the end of each day.

Day 1 Arrive in San José

On arrival in San José you'll be met and transferred to your hotel. The beautifully sculpted hotel cascades down the hill (Alto de Las Palomas) providing exquisite views of San Jose and the surrounding volcanoes and valley. The carved look melds different styles --- Spanish-Moorish medieval, countryside *elegant* --- into one graceful structure. The vaulted ceilings in the Paseo and wide stone stairway lead castle-like from the reclusive guest rooms to La Luz Restaurant. It is set in a quiet residential and commercial district, just 10 minutes from the centre of San José. The hotel has an attractive swimming pool and is ideal for families. Rooms all have air conditioning and private bathrooms. **Hotel with swimming pool (breakfast)**

Day 2 Travel to Cahuita,

After breakfast, if it's clear you should have your first views of the forest clad mountains and volcanoes that surround the capital. We then set off for Cahuita National Park on the Caribbean coast (4.5 hours). The two kilometre long beach here is one of the country's best, with light white sand and palm trees. The sand is made almost exclusively from the nearby coral reefs and shells and is therefore lighter than normal. The reef begins at the end of a long beach and ends at Punta Cahuita, a little peninsula that protrudes more than three kilometres into the ocean. It is an excellent habitat for sea turtles. More than 27 types of corals, 140 sorts of molluscs, 44 different crustaceans, 122 types of algae as well as 500 kinds of fish can be found in the park. **Lodge with swimming pool, 2 nights (Breakfast).**

Day 3 Cahuita; Canoe, Hike and relax!

This morning you will enjoy a Canoe Tour thru the canals of the Carbon River, where you will be able to see the most amazing flora and fauna that the Caribbean has to offer. You will end at a quiet beach in Cahuita National Park where you will have a short break, and then continue with a hike through a trail in the National park ending up at Cacao Trails Park. The afternoon is at leisure to enjoy further exploration of the National Park and its beaches. You may wish to visit the Bri Bri and Kekoldi Indian Reserve (Optional) to see the Green Iguana farm and medicinal plant garden. Here a small indigenous family has dedicated itself to the reproduction of the Green Iguana (*Iguana iguana*), a species that was on the way to extinction. There is also a chance to see the Reserve market (bananas, banana trees, cacao, oranges, coconuts, etc.) and enjoy some fresh tropical fruits snack (watermelon, pineapple, mango, melon, maracuya, papaya, etc.)

Day 4 Drive to Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí (3.5 hours), horse riding

You'll take the road to Limón and then continue to Siquirres (driving time approx 3.5 hours) before turning off into Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí – one of Costa Rica's most famous rainforest areas and perfect for families wanting to explore and enjoy activities in the forest. On the way you may wish to stop at the Sloth Rehabilitation Centre (optional). The centre takes care of dozens of these animals and during the tour, you will have the opportunity to learn about their behaviour, habitat, population status and many other facts about this species. This center is located in a beautiful rain forest, where you will enjoy beside the sloths, monkeys, iguanas and 255 species of colourful birds. In Sarapiquí your accommodation is typical of the area, offering an authentic rainforest experience and a variety of activities and interests, both within the grounds of the lodge as well as nearby, in the rainforest itself. Rafting, canopy tours, inner-tubing and riding can all be arranged (extra). The lodge also has its own rainforest trails, a swimming pool and a restaurant. In the afternoon you will enjoy a horse-riding tour. **Tent suite with swimming pool (breakfast)**

Day 5 Rafting, transfer to Arenal (2.5 hours)

Rise early today and you'll be able to watch the birds and wildlife in the gardens around the Lodge before breakfast. You will then head to the water for a morning of Rafting. The section you are likely to do is about 2 hours long, 13 Km run on class II and III rapids on the scenic Sarapiquí River. Transfer to Arenal volcano in the afternoon (around 2½ hours drive). This 1633 metre high volcano is said to be one of the world's most active volcanoes - small-scale eruptions take place on an almost continuous basis around the clock. However it's only at night that the activity becomes really apparent - if it's clear you can see lava flows glowing incandescent like a firework display. Unfortunately the summit is often shrouded in cloud, so you may not be able to see much, but you still know you're near a volcano because of the subterranean rumblings and splutters. Your hotel, set in a quiet location just outside La Fortuna, is surrounded by gardens and rivers in a very peaceful environment. **Hotel with swimming pool, 2 nights (breakfast)**

Day 6 Mountain biking, night walk.

Early morning you will enjoy a Mountain Biking Adventure, into the area where the forest, the Arenal Volcano and the lake meet and leads you to a beautiful trail, full of wildlife. The tour starts from the Arenal Lake Dam, where we take an old trail into the forest. At the end of the trail we will arrive at the entrance of the Arenal Volcano National Park and then get on the way to the Observatory. On this trail you will have the chance to see many different birds, for example: Squirrel Cuckoos, Keel Billed Toucans, Crested Guans, Slaty Tailed Trogons, Black Headed Trogons, Bare Throated Tiger Herons, Laughing Falcons; as well as howler monkeys and raccoons. The run is likely to be about 18-20 kilometres and takes in the region of 3½ hours. Afternoon at leisure however you may wish to consider the optional Sky Tram/Trek tour. This adventure begins with the Sky Tram to the highest point of the Arenal Reserve from where you can observe the rain forest, the Arenal Volcano and the lake. Once you have reached the top of the Arenal reserve, you begin your adrenaline adventure tour above the treetops, which consists on a system of zip lines, over the treetops through 10 different cables which in total make 13,387 feet, with lengths that reach 2,526 feet, and heights of 460 feet, that allows you to observe the rainforest and its landscape from a different perspective. At night you will enjoy a night walk tour into the forest. As night falls, the tropical forest becomes a different ecosystem. By using of lanterns you will go in search of night wildlife activity.

Day 7 Cross Arenal Lake (3.5 hours), Monteverde

Early morning you will cross by boat the Arenal lake. This service, half tour – half transfer, is scenic, fast and the newest way to go from La Fortuna (Arenal Volcano Area) to the Monteverde area. You will board a comfortable pontoon boat for a 30 to 40 minutes (approx.) ride to Río Chiquito, a little town at the other side of the lake. Arenal Lake is the largest and the most important lake in Costa Rica. It was created in 1974 to provide hydroelectric energy for the country. It is also a place where you can find different kinds of resident and migratory birds. Sometimes mammals can be seen in the surroundings, also great views of the Arenal Volcano when it's clear. Once at Río Chiquito, you'll leave the boat and make a short break to strength the legs, after, another 1½ hour microbus ride to get to the hotels in the Monteverde area, sometimes during the rainy season this transfer could take longer. In the afternoon you will visit the Frog pond, where you can admire over 20 species of frogs and other amphibians. See extraordinary frogs, such as the colourful Poison Arrow Frog, the very large Marine Toad and the famous Red Eyed Tree Frog. Frogs and toads are undergoing massive worldwide declines - the centre is committed to the conservation of amphibians and dedicates part of the proceeds from each ticket purchased to research and conservation efforts. **Hotel, 2 nights (breakfast).**

Day 8 Monteverde, zip wires

You will visit 100% Aventura premises, an adventure centre created in order to conserve the region's natural biodiversity. Walking on hanging bridges that lasts approx 2 hours or a 2.3 km walk, it gives you the opportunity to observe the forest from above. Afterwards you will feel the adrenaline while enjoying the zip wire of 6 cables of different heights and lengths, before arriving to the rappel and the Tarzan Swing. In the afternoon there are a range of optional trips available for you to take in the Selvatura Park area. Of particular interest may be the Hummingbird Garden or World of Butterflies or you can head back up into the treetops for another high level walkway experience. **Hotel for 2 nights (breakfast)**

Day 9 Morning at leisure then transfer to San Jose and flight to London

You'll be driven to the airport (3.5 hours) for your international flight back to London. You are advised to arrive at the airport at least 3 hours prior to departure. Please also note that departure tax is not included in the tour price as this must be paid locally. Please allow about US\$26 in cash for this (paid at the airport). Overnight flight to London.

Day 10 Arrive London

Your flight arrives in London

Extension to the Pacific Coast

We highly recommend extending your stay with a visit to the Pacific Coast, which boasts a rocky coastline, sweeping bays, deserted islands and great beaches.

Days 1 to 8. As above

Day 9 Drive to Manuel Antonio on the Pacific Ocean

This morning you'll leave Monteverde and drive to the Pacific Coast at Manuel Antonio (4½ hours) stopping to break the journey at Carara National Park or Villa Lapas. This is a particularly good place to relax and unwind. This national park contains some of the most beautiful scenery in the country. This humid tropical forest is home to many species of flora and fauna that are in danger or extinction. **Hotel 3 nights, with swimming pool (breakfast)**

Days 10 & 11 Manuel Antonio – free to relax or take activities

Your time in Manuel Antonio is left free to use as you wish, perhaps visit the National Park, horseback riding, Damas Island boat tour, kayaking, river rafting, jet ski, dolphin encounter boat rides or just relaxing by the pool. Your base has a good restaurant and a swimming pool and is right on the beach. Activities which you can enjoy nearby include sport-fishing, horse-riding and water skiing.



Days 12 & 13 Return to San José and overnight flight to London

After a morning at leisure you will be driven back to San José (journey time approx 3½ hours), for your flight home arriving the following day in London.

This itinerary includes our group flights from London. If you are making other flight arrangements, please refer to your Confirmation Invoice and Joining Instructions for details of the start or end of the trip. Please remember international flights and trip dates do occasionally change, so please always purchase flexible tickets.

Each itinerary is planned many months in advance and although it is our intention to operate the itinerary as printed in the brochure and detailed here, it may be necessary to make some changes as a result of alterations to flight schedules, climatic conditions, limitations of infrastructure or other operational factors which are beyond our control. As a consequence, the order or location of overnight stops may vary from those outlined but we will always endeavour to keep you informed of any such changes. Included meals are indicated in the daily itinerary.

Optional Extras

These excursions, if available, can be arranged through your tour leader (approx. per person cost shown below)

Cahuita - Bri Bri & Kekoldi Indian Reserve	£50.00
Sloth Rehabilitation Centre	£15.00
Sarapiquí – Bat Tour	£11.00
Sarapiquí – Night Walk	£11.00
Arenal – Rafting	£35.00
Arenal – Inner tubing	£10.00
Arenal – Sky Tram & Sky Trek	£41.00
Monteverde – Hummingbird Garden	£8.00
Monteverde – World of Butterflies	£8.00
Manuel Antonio – Ocean Kayak and Snorkelling	£40.00
Manuel Antonio – Damas island Boat Tour	£40.00
Manuel Antonio – Dolphin Encounter	£50.00

Is this right for your family? All children learn about the rainforest in school these days - this trip gives them an opportunity to experience it first hand and learn about its diverse flora and fauna. No experience is required for the activities, just a sense of adventure and keenness to “have a go” – full instruction is provided. Travel in Costa Rica is easy as the distances are relatively short, while the lodges are comfortable and full of character.

Lone Parents Single parents or other adults travelling alone with children should be aware that some countries, including the UK, require documentation confirming that the individual has authority to travel with the minor. It is crucial that you contact the relevant country embassy for further information on exactly what may be required. These details can be found on the Foreign & Commonwealth Website under the appropriate country www.fc.gov.uk/travel

Climate The dry season is between December and April. Although the rainy season, locally called the “Green Season”, runs from May to mid-November, July and August can be very pleasant, with sun in the morning and afternoon rain. It does not usually rain continuously all day during the rain season. The wettest time is between September and mid-November. There is little variation in temperature throughout the year – with any change mainly depending on altitude. In most of the country it is pleasantly warm year round (sometimes hot and sticky), but it can get surprisingly cool if you're high up in the mountains.

The average monthly climate in San Jose:

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Max °C	24	24	26	26	27	26	25	26	26	25	25	24
Min °C	14	14	15	17	17	17	17	16	16	16	16	14
Rainfall (mm)	15	5	20	46	229	241	211	241	305	300	145	41

Accommodation You will be staying in a comfortable mix of tented camps, lodges and hotels which allow you to experience nature closely. All hotels have private facilities and are on a twin share basis - most of them are air-conditioned. Many have swimming pools. All hotels are modern, clean comfortable and offer a friendly service. The mention of a swimming pool at a hotel should not be taken as a guarantee but rather an indication. You should also be aware that swimming pools at the hotels are often unheated and so can be cold in the winter months or even closed.

Food and Drink Meals included as per itinerary. Please remember to drink plenty of bottled water during your trip. Food in Costa Rica is good and wholesome, although you will have to get used to the ubiquitous rice and beans which are

served with just about every meal (including breakfast!). There's plenty of excellent fresh fish available (especially close to both coasts) and chicken is generally very good. Salads, vegetables and fresh fruit are plentiful.

Local Costs

A small bottle of mineral water (500ml)	£0.60
A large bottle of mineral water (1 litre)	£0.80
A can of coke (soft drinks)	£0.60
A carton or bottle of fruit juice	£0.80
A bottle of beer	£1.20
A light lunch time snack – sandwich for example	£2.00
A two course meal* - excluding drinks	£6.00
A three course meal* - excluding drinks	£8.00

*Based on a mid range tourist restaurant.

Currency The unit of currency is Costa Rican Colón (CRC). At the time of writing UK£1 = CRC955 and US\$1 = CRC 588 (Sep 2009). However US dollars are widely accepted and have come to be regarded as the country's second currency. US dollar Travellers' Cheques and credit cards are readily accepted in banks, hotels and some souvenir shops. We recommend that you change money at the airport.

Tippling is a recognised part of life and although at your discretion you will be expected to reward service. It should be remembered, however, that over-generosity could lead to jealousy in poor countries. Please remember that all tips should be a way for individuals to thank staff for good service.

Please also remember that your tour leader works hard and for long hours to make your holiday run smoothly, a suitable reward for good service would be £1-£2 from each person, per day. It is usual to collect this between yourselves as a group and present it to the leader on completion of the tour.

Security Whilst the vast majority of travellers never experience anything untoward it is worth taking precautions particularly in urban areas. You should take sensible precautions in crowded areas such as street markets and airports, where pick-pocketing is common, and keep clear of any street disturbances. Don't wear expensive jewellery, never leave your bags unattended, keep large amounts of money, cameras and mobile phones out of sight when walking in town centres, and avoid walking in city centres after dark. Keep copies of important documents, including passports, in a separate place to the documents themselves, together with details of credit cards. Leave copies at home with a friend too. Safeguard valuables, important documents and cash and deposit them in hotel safes, where practicable.

Language The official language in Costa Rica is Spanish, although English is widely spoken in tourist areas.

Time Costa Rica is GMT -6 hours

Passports and visas

British nationals do not require a visa to enter Costa Rica and can stay as visitors for up to three months. Passports should have a validity of more than six months from the date of entry. If you are travelling via the U.S. please see the separate US Visa Waiver information sheet.

Departure tax: US\$26 per person is payable on leaving the country.

Clothing & Equipment List for Costa Rica – Active Costa Rica

In general pack light-weight, loose fitting and comfortable clothing plus some warmer windproof items for cooler mornings/evenings at altitude. Light-weight cotton clothing is recommended in this climate with a wrap or sweater for the cooler evenings.

CLOTHING	NUMBER PER PERSON	Check	EQUIPMENT	Check
Walking Shoes	1 pair		Kitbag/Rucksack 50 – 80litres	
Trainers or Strong Sandals	1 pair – all purpose wear		Lightweight Daypack – 25 litres	
Socks	4 +		A variety of plastic bags	
Waterproof Jacket	1 lightweight		Sunglasses	
T-Shirts	3 +		Personal First Aid Kit	
Long Trousers or Skirt	2 +		Large Water Bottle	
Short Trousers	2		Insect Repellent with high DEET content	
Long Sleeve Shirt	2 +		Torch and Batteries	
Track Suit Bottoms or Similar	Optional		Camera, memory cards and accessories	
Sunhat / Baseball cap	Essential (styled to shade face, ears and neck)		Towel or Sarong	
Warm jacket	1		Guide Book & map	
Thin Fleece or Sweatshirt	1			
Warm hat, scarf and gloves	Woolly or fleece (Nov-Feb)			
Swim Wear	1			

ITEM	Check	ITEM	Check
Passport/ Visa			
Air Tickets		Universal travelling adapter	
Money/Travellers Cheques		Binoculars - essential	
Cash Cards/Visa		Sunscreen – lots of it	
Insurance Documents			
Trip Information and Itinerary			
Money Security Belt/Pouch			

For details regarding **hand luggage restrictions** please visit www.baa.com